

Re: Scheuch Edward

NEWSWEEK

Re: Goldenson, Leonard

Approved For Release

19 APRIL 1965

Soc 4-01.3 ABC

Soc 4-01.4 Paramount

TV-RADIO

The Goldenson Touch

The picture was one of a television wasteland filled with "safe carbon-copy programs," reruns of old series, and old movies. What's more, the speaker told his Washington audience, there is "an abdication of creative responsibility ... We are not daring enough ... We must ... stick our creative necks out." The speaker? Newton Minow? No. Of all people, Leonard Goldenson.

As president of American Broadcasting-Paramount Theaters, Leonard Goldenson would seem to be a prime subject of his own attack; after all, his network discovered sex and "Shindig" almost in the same week. Why his cry for creativity? For one thing, he was getting the National Association of Broadcasters'

Although ABC has made gains in public affairs (its news budget has tripled since 1960), the network's real credits are in ratings and profits, which, claim the TV pragmatists, is the name of the game. In ten years ABC, with far fewer affiliates than either NBC or CBS, has gone from patsy to peer in its rivalry with the other two companies. The three vie closely in Nielsens; ABC now has three of the top ten shows, and last week it reported record revenues of \$421 million for 1964 vs. \$387 million for 1963.

Empire: The main reason for the steep climb is chief executive officer Goldenson. In a business as affected by the winds as kite-flying, Goldenson seems to have a flair for the updraft. The son of a clothing merchant in Scottsdale, Pa., and a 1930 graduate of Harvard Law School, Goldenson got a job at the

Side to a 40-story headquarters next door to the new 38-story CBS building.

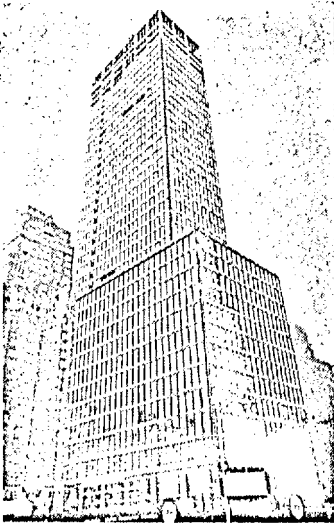
Unlike RCA's David Sarnoff or CBS's William Paley, Leonard Goldenson has no public image, only rarely makes appearances or pronouncements. (Last week, in one of his infrequent news conferences, and doubtless with a view to the ABC image, Goldenson announced that ABC was giving \$76,000 to the Yale School of Drama for seven fellowships in television playwriting.) He is most comfortable with his family, friends, and board of directors. A serious, avuncular man of 59, he lives with his wife and three daughters in a fifteen-room house in Westchester's Mamaroneck, has friends up for weekends of tennis and double features of new movies, with Coca-Cola served between features. When alone, he often watches all three networks at once on a three-eyed rig.

Most of all, Goldenson is a show businessman, a mass-entertainment expert. "His sole object is circulation," says a former associate. "He measures everything in terms of box office. If he thought Shakespeare would rate well, then he would put Shakespeare on the air ... He's a retailer, the Sears Roebuck of entertainment. That's what he wants to be."

Detached: Goldenson honestly seems to like ABC's programs. He can rattle off affectionately the whole complex plot of "Peyton Place." His favorite ABC program? "That's like asking a father who his favorite child is." When he watches television or movies, he shuts off his own taste. "If it's a B picture," he says, "I try to look at it as the type of person who goes to a B picture would look at it." He tries also "to anticipate public taste ... I have to watch trends from all sources ... I talk to people all the time ... cabdrivers, elevator men, maids, executives."

The key to his current success is thinking young. "We're trying to appeal to the younger families of America," he says, "where the head of the household is 40 years or younger." A disenchanting former aide lowers the age, to about 16. He coolly pegs ABC the No. 1 kid show, and Goldenson the Proxy Teen-ager. Goldenson knows, in any case, what young people want—"Peyton," "Shindig," and next season, the corn-fed "Tammy" and the boy-fed "Gidget."

He is reputed to have a fantastically retentive memory. "He has seen probably every motion picture made since 1932," says one friend, "and he knows the running time and how much each movie made or lost." He also knows the hour-by-hour schedule of his competitors and how the shows are doing. The first thing he does every morning in his office is to read the box-office receipts from his theater chain, to find out how's business and what's selling. Realizing that "Goldfinger" is big at the box office, he has



ABC's new home and Leonard Goldenson: A 40-story headquarters for the 'Sears Roebuck of entertainment'

Distinguished Service Award for 1964, and he had to make a speech; for another, he is really in favor of innovation—especially the ABC kind.

When Goldenson told the NAB last month that one of the ways ABC was answering the creative lag was with two and a half hours of "original quality programming" this summer, he meant two and a half hours of "Peyton Place," "The King Family," and Lawrence Welk. In 1966, added Goldenson, his network will save one prime hour a week for a "program innovation ... We don't know yet what it will be—but the empty hour is sitting there, posing its challenge."

Viewers hungry for creativity can judge the prospects by ABC's past innovations. "Peyton Place" is novel in the sense that it is soap opera moved to prime evening time. "We originally introduced the Western trend," Goldenson told NEWSWEEK's Mel Gussow, the so-called whodunit, like "77 Sunset Strip," oceanography in "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea," and we brought Disney to television."

bottom of the Depression with a law firm that called upon him to help reorganize Paramount's bankrupt theater circuit in New England. He reorganized so well that by the time he was 32 he headed Paramount's theater division. With the decline of movie attendance in the early '50s, the winds of change blew him into television. He merged the sagging Paramount with the moribund ABC to form ABC-Paramount, and nourished it into the present empire of television, radio, records, and theaters, plus such provinces as magazines (Prairie Farmer) and a Florida resort.

Goldenson has weathered not only changing consumer tastes but also flare-ups within his own organization. Chieftains of ABC's TV network have faded out like some of their programs, but Goldenson thrives and his board of directors hardly ever changes (although Norton Simon staged an unsuccessful stock take-over last year). Symbolic of growth, ABC moves this fall from its makeshift clutter of offices (including a onetime stable) on New York's West

Approved For Release 2005/01/13 : CIA-RDP88-01365R000300180004-4

Continued